The income security system in Ontario is critical to support individuals across the province who are experiencing poverty, and the recommendations outlined in the Roadmap present an important path forward to improve the system of supports that are available to Ontarians. On behalf of London's Child & Youth Network (CYN), I am writing in support of the recommendations presented in *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*; the attached submission outlines the Child & Youth Network's position on the Roadmap, and highlights key recommendations the Network views to be particularly important and directly related to our work. The recommendations that have been presented in the *Roadmap for Change* either directly, or indirectly, advance the vast majority of past recommendations the CYN has made, and will go even further to support calls for greater systematic changes, that if implemented, would greatly improve the lives of those living in poverty.

Poverty is a complex community challenge that will require an ongoing, coordinated response at the community level, as well as from all levels of government. In order to successfully combat poverty, we will need to commit to continue to working together, aligning the important work that goes on at the community level through the Child & Youth Network and *London for All*, our community's plan to end poverty in a generation, with poverty reduction strategies at the provincial and federal level.

Moving forward, the Child & Youth Network is committed to continuing to partner with all levels of government to build a community, province, and country where all people can reach their full potential.

Lynne Livingstone, Chair, London's Child & Youth Network
London’s Child & Youth Network

Submission to the Ministry of Community and Social Services about *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*

**Background**
The Child and Youth Network (CYN) is composed of over 170 agencies and individuals that span the non-profit, education, health, recreation, and social service sectors. The CYN is dedicated to helping build strong families and breaking down the barriers that put our children, youth and families at risk. We do this by collectively planning, facilitating collaboration, building awareness, providing education, and improving access to services. Our priorities are ending poverty, making literacy a way of life, healthy eating and healthy physical activity and creating a family centred service system. In 2007, CYN members developed a collective vision to guide the work of the network to 2015: “Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow.” This vision still holds today and we have an agenda to take the network to 2021.

In 2008, the community identified Ending Poverty as a priority for London’s children, youth, and families. At that time, there were many troubling statistics that illustrated the issue of poverty in London, but there was one that crystallized the issue; **1 in 5 London children will experience poverty during their childhood.** This was, and is, intolerable. Through the collective energy and commitment of community partners, the CYN works to create opportunities that seek to reduce the impact and break the cycle of generational poverty in London. To see how we aim to achieve this, click here.

At 17% - more than 62,000 residents - **London’s poverty rates eclipse provincial and national levels.** *London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty,* is our community’s plan to end poverty in a generation. Developed based on the feedback and experience of Londoners with lived experience, and organizations that work to reduce the impact of poverty every day, this plan is truly reflective of our community’s approach to end poverty. Led by the community, London is moving forward with our goal that **London will reach its full potential by ending poverty in a generation.**
Poverty in London

There is an undeniable urgency to addressing poverty in London now before it becomes even more entrenched. Despite the best effort of many in our community, the barriers stubbornly persist. While it’s true that our economy has exhibited promising signs of recovery, that recovery has still not reached London’s most vulnerable.

Despite the focus and targeted intervention to decrease child poverty in London, the number of children and youth that are experiencing poverty is increasing. The number of children living in families who are relying on social assistance has been increasing at a rate of 2.2% per year since 2006 (Poverty Trends in London, 2016). By 2016, there were 962 more children on the caseload than in 2006. The number of children living in households with low income has been increasing an average of 0.7% per year. This compares to Ontario where there has been an overall downward trend. Unfortunately, more children and families live in poverty now than when the House of Commons unanimously voted to end childhood poverty more than 25 years ago. It is clear that more work needs to be done to bring children out of poverty and to achieve our community’s goal reach its full potential by ending poverty in a generation (London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty)

Income Security is a Critical Step to Support Poverty Reduction

To break the cycle and stop the next generation from living in poverty, it is important to assist low-income families to become financially stable through a variety of means to support families to become self-reliant and successful. This can be achieve through measures such as:

- Ensuring adequate social assistance rates
- Supporting families to build savings and assets
- Increasing skills and supporting employment opportunities allows families to become self-reliant and successful.

Identifying and removing barriers to financial stability is essential to helping families to gain and maintain employment in order to break the cycle of poverty. Research has demonstrated that consistent, adequate incomes for families have positive impacts on health, quality of life, and the community as a whole. Poverty cannot be solved locally, and all levels of government play a critical role to reduce and alleviate poverty.

The Roadmap for Change is a comprehensive plan that will help break the cycle of poverty in Ontario. The recommendations contained in the report will significantly improve the income security system in Ontario. In addition the plan will take important steps to improve the relationship of the province with Indigenous peoples. The CYN is supportive of this plan, and recommends that the Roadmap for Change be adapted by the provincial government as the 10-year plan to improve the income security system in Ontario.
Past Recommendations Made by the Child & Youth Network

Over the last several years, CYN partners have developed three position papers in the area of income security that have outlined a number of recommendations to improve the system of income supports for Ontario residents, which included recommendations to improve Ontario and ODSP, as well as recommending the development of a portable housing benefit.

Since these recommendations were put forward, the provincial government has implemented a number of policy enhancements that have addressed past CYN recommendations. Some of these changes include:

- Increasing social assistance asset levels;
- Exempting certain assets;
- Improving employment earning exemption rules;
- Exempting most forms of loans as income for OW/ODSP;
- Increasing the ODSP mileage rate; and,
- Allowing for higher levels of financial assistance from family and friends.

The recommendations that have been presented in The Roadmap for Change either directly, or indirectly, advance the vast majority of recommendations the CYN has made to improve the income security system, and will go further to support calls for greater systematic changes that if implemented, would greatly improve the lives of those living in poverty. Attached as Appendix A is a list of recommendations from the Roadmap that the CYN would like to specifically highlight.

The CYN recommends that the Province adopt the Roadmap and begin implementing the recommendations contained in the plan to break the cycle of poverty in Ontario.